

Momentum 2 – Growing
Psalm 127

*I want to let you know up-front {right away} that this series of sermons owes a great deal to Michael Slaughters book *Momentum for Life*. It is not my intention to present his ideas as my own, but only to share the important lessons that I have learned from his book with others.*

- I. Today we're continuing a discussion we had last week about Momentum.
 - a. We used the image of a race.
 - i. We began where every race begins – at the start.
 - ii. Now that the starter's pistol has gone off, it's time to focus on the first lap of this race.
 - b. Last week we talked about "devotion."
 - i. And asked how deep your commitment to God is?
 - ii. What can you do to deepen that commitment?
 - c. An act of the will is necessary to re-orient yourself to Jesus' way of thinking.
 - i. That act of the will is a conscious decision on the part of each of us.
 - ii. As a result, we begin to pursue the things of God.
 - d. So that our thinking, our growth, and our fruitfulness end up going hand in hand.
 - i. On the heels of our decision to "break inertia" and run the race before us, comes our first challenge.
 - ii. **Growth** – the challenge of living every day ready to learn whatever God wants to teach us.
 - e. That challenge leads to a decision - a decision leads to behavior.
 - i. Behavior leads to growth.
 - ii. Growth leads to fruit.
- II. Look with me at Psalm 127.
 - a. Ps. 127:2 – "In vain you rise early and stay up late toiling for food to eat – for he grants sleep to those he loves."
 - b. We work hard – but do we work hard doing the right things?
 - i. While we are working hard to keep up in the rat race –
 - ii. God is working hard to get us to pay attention to the things that really matter.
 1. God *wants* us to know the foundation upon which he builds a house.
 2. He *wants* us to know the care with which he watches over us.
 3. He *wants* us to have the wisdom we need to navigate the turmoil of life's seas.
- III. Pursuing Wisdom
 - a. The Bible repeatedly challenges us to pursue wisdom.
 - i. Proverbs 2: 2-5 – "Turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding – indeed, if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God."
 - ii. Proverbs 3:21 – "My son, do not let wisdom and understanding out of your sight, "
 - b. Wisdom requires big thinking.
 - i. It requires re-evaluating; it requires looking at things in new ways.

- ii. Stretching, asking questions.
 - 1. Pushing yourself to consider things you've never considered before.
 - 2. Asking the tough questions, even the ones that make you squirm.
 - c. Matthew 9:17 – “Neither do people pour new wine into old wineskins. If they do, the skins will burst; the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved.”
 - i. Jesus said this after the Pharisees asked him why he was eating with tax collectors and sinners.
 - 1. The Pharisees couldn't understand what he was doing.
 - 2. Why? Because they had become old wineskins that can't hold new wine.
 - ii. Our minds need to be new wineskins.
 - 1. Stretchable, pliable, flexible.
 - 2. Able to adapt to new situations and challenges.
 - iii. Many of us let our minds atrophy.
 - 1. We have this anti-intellectual bias that says that knowledge is evil.
 - 2. That more knowledge will inevitably draw you away from God.
 - 3. But if all truth is God's truth, then that can't be the case, can it?
 - iv. But God wants us to have more than knowledge; he wants us to have wisdom.
 - v. God wants our minds to be transformed – completely changed.
 - 1. That's the purpose of growth – transformation.
 - 2. We want to grow for no other reason than that we want to be transformed by God.
- IV. I want to give you four steps toward the pursuit of wisdom.
 - a. These four things illustrate the way learning can transform a mind.
 - b. They give us good principles to live by that make transformation possible.
- V. **Step 1 – Daily reading.**
 - a. Read everything!
 - i. Read the Bible.
 - 1. Find one that fits.
 - a. A slim line for on the go at work.
 - b. An NIV that's simple to read.
 - 2. Find a time that works.
 - a. *When* is less important than *if*.
 - b. Stick with it!!! Don't give up. Make it a priority.
 - ii. Read devotional literature.
 - 1. Several weeks ago, I mentioned four books to get you started.
 - 2. That was the tip of the iceberg.
 - 3. There are so many that you don't have an excuse for not doing it.
 - iii. Read study books.
 - 1. Read good stuff.
 - 2. Read people you like – Eugene Peterson, Andy Stanley, Henry Blackaby.
 - 3. Read people you disagree with – stretch yourself.
 - b. This is going to be work. Stretching hurts.
 - i. Hebrews 12:11 – “NO discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.”
 - ii. Begin with the end in mind.

- iii. What do you really want at the end of the day?
- VI. **Step 2 – Seek excellence and consistency.**
 - a. Over time – you’ll hit the “blahs.” – Don’t give in!!
 - i. John 2:10 – “Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now.”
 - ii. I think that’s God’s M.O. – God always saves the best for last.
 - iii. You’ll never know that if you give up too soon and give in to the blah’s.
 - b. So, don’t become old; become aged like wine in new wineskins.
 - i. There are no such things a retired Christians.
 - ii. You don’t get to a certain point and then just step off to the side and watch the race roll by you.
 - iii. You don’t “graduate.”
 - 1. You don’t get a diploma and then stop!
 - 2. That’s not graduating, that stagnating.
 - iv. Proverbs 1:5 – “Let the wise listen and add to their learning, and let the discerning get guidance.”
 - 1. Even the wise still listen and learn.
 - 2. Maybe that’s why their wise.
 - v. A wise man once told me, “Never leave school; become your own dean.”
- VII. **Step 3 – Make people your priority.**
 - a. One of the pitfalls of being a great learner is that you see learning as an end in itself.
 - i. Learning is never just for the sake of learning.
 - ii. You learn (more about God) so you can be used by God and a use to others.
 - b. Psalm 122:8-9 – “For the sake of my friends and of all the people, I will say, “Peace be within you.” For the sake of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek your prosperity.”
 - i. Seeking God’s prosperity leads to concern for people – “for the sake of friends.”
 - ii. Followers of Jesus should be the most “self-less” people on earth.
 - c. Matthew 25:34-36 says, “Then the King will say to those on his right, “Come, you who are blessed by my Father, take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.”
 - i. Verse 40 – “truly, I tell you whatever you did for one of the I east of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.”
 - ii. The Bible is clear; we truly serve God and please God when we serve others.
- VIII. **Step 4 – Pour yourself out.**
 - a. Pour yourself into people.
 - b. Sacrifice yourself for the people that Christ sacrificed himself for.
 - c. Matthew 10:39 – “Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it.”
 - i. One of those paradoxes that the Gospel is known for.
 - ii. One that only begins to make sense when we consider the phrase “for my sake.”

1. I found my life with Christ and lost the life I thought I *had* to have.
 2. I lost *that* life and Christ helped me find a *new* (more fulfilling) one.
- IX. Quickly, here are four action steps that will put you on the road to becoming a life-long learner of the things of God. Things you can begin to do today.
- a. We've just seen some good principles, but what do they look like when we put them to work?
 - b. Read – always be reading something.
 - i. Personal devotion – key.
 - ii. I don't like to read – well, that's why God invented audio books!
 - iii. Always be working toward moving toward God.
 - c. Observe –train yourself to “be on the lookout” for God-moments and opportunities to learn.
 - i. Proverbs 1:20 – “Wisdom cries aloud on the streets.”
 - ii. Are you watching and listening for wisdom?
 - iii. If you're not watching, not listening, not pursuing wisdom – you won't find it.
 - d. Attend – a small group – be with others who are learning and growing.
 - i. Oh no! He's talking about small groups again.
 1. You can't phone it in.
 2. You have to get plugged in.
 - ii. That's what we're trying to do on Wednesday nights w/ Momentum for Change.
 1. Get plugged in and get going.
 2. {*Small groups list*}
 3. {*Sunday school*}
 - iii. There is a difference between Trailblazers, Pioneers and Settlers.
 1. Trailblazers: first one's in.
 2. Pioneers: first one's to follow the trailblazers in spite of the obstacles.
 3. Settlers: Squat down and stay someplace safe when the going gets tough.
 4. Pittsburg is for Settlers.
 - e. Do – we learn best by doing.
 1. When it captures our hands, our hearts and our heads – we're in to stay.
 2. After the reading, the praying, the small group, the devotion time – there has to be a “doing time.”
 - ii. What will you do today that will make you a better disciple?
 1. What is your service? {*your gift to the body*}
 2. What is your ministry? {*your gift to others*}
 - f. Take each of these four things in order.
 - i. Which is the first one you're not doing (or not doing well)?
 - ii. Start doing it.
 - iii. Then move on to the next one.
 - iv. Keep moving – a long continual obedience in one direction – that's what God looking for.
- X. The starter's pistol has sounded and you've gotten off to a good start.
- a. Last week, you made a good faith commitment to follow Jesus longer, further, stronger.
 - i. Now you're out of the blocks and on the first lap.
 - ii. You're beginning to find your stride.

- iii. You recognize that finishing this race means that you keep learning and keep growing.
- b. You're building up momentum.
 - i. So don't stop now. The race isn't won at the start.
 - ii. The winner is determined at the finish.