

Couple's Devotional Study

Shared Growth in Christ

You and your mate are walking down the road together. You're sharing with him/her all that good stuff from Philippians 2 you packed in your suitcase: comfort, love, tenderness, compassion, etc. You are reading the Scriptures and praying together as you walk. Jesus Christ has become someone easy to talk about. Now, as you walk along, you find yourself growing stronger spiritually, with more energy and stamina than before. This, dear friends, *should* be a natural progression.

But what should be natural to the "new creature in Christ" is often radically **unnatural** to our "old self." Our hearts want to obey God's life-giving principles of love and compassion, but they sometimes end up in the bottom of our suitcase. And what are those **old rags** on top? Bitterness and criticism. Every time you open your emotional suitcase, you must make a conscious choice to push aside the rags and rummage for the love and compassion. But each time you choose love and compassion makes it easier to find them in your suitcase the next time. For **God is at work** within us. He is the One who helps us discard the rags and choose the garments of righteousness as described in Philippians 2.

We have sometimes heard a wife or husband say something like, "My mate isn't growing in the Lord [like me]. I beg [nag and badger] him/her all the time to come to Bible study with me, but he/she just isn't interested." That spouse seems to be taking Hebrews 10:24, *And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds*, to actually mean, 'And let us consider how we may **badger** one another' or '...how we may **criticize** one another....' (There are those old **rags** again.)

Hebrews 10:24 — *And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.*

The word in that verse is **SPUR**. A simple little word that means *to stimulate, to rouse to action*. Nagging is not spurring. Badgering is not spurring. Criticizing is not spurring. So how do we **spur** our traveling partner?

Sometimes, the best way to spur is to duck. That's right — **duck!** Our tendency is to try to grow *for* our mate rather than allowing them to grow at their own rate. We tell them what they should do, what they should think, even what they should feel. We have their growth pattern all planned and get very upset when they don't keep our schedule.

Our advice is *duck*. Although we think we are helping, sometimes our good intentions cause us to actually stand **between** our mate and God. So duck! You have to get out of the way so God can get a good shot at your mate.

This is not meant as condemnation upon you in any way. Your *intent* is not to hinder, but to help. But in reality, your action may be accomplishing the very opposite of what you really want. Ask yourself, "Is what I am doing working?" If not, then it is time to try something else: a closed mouth, soft answers, sweet smiles, and lots and lots of prayer. **That** is ducking. And when you duck, God, can work on your mate.

As you continue down the road together — *allowing* one another to grow — try applying Ephesians 5:19 to your daily journey. *Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord.*

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We have some friends in San Jose, California who used to sing (they may still be singing) road signs to the tune of the "Alleluia Chorus." "Mer-ging traf-fic. Mer-ging traf-fic. Mer-ging tra-a-af-fic." They say it really helped shorten trips.

Yeah, well...maybe not road signs, but there are lots of edifying songs you can sing together, from familiar old hymns to the new praise songs. It's a good habit to get into.

Whenever the Gillogly's went on family vacations, we would sing together most of the way. We'd go through the alphabet singing songs whose titles matched each letter, with everyone taking a turn. Or we would spell H-O-R-S-E (or some other animal) with children's choruses. Even now that our family is grown and it's just the two of us, we sing together: in the car, during our devotions and when we paint or clean up the yard or take walks.

When we sing songs together like

*You are my hiding place
You always fill my heart
With songs of deliverance
Whenever I am afraid
I will trust in you*

What do you think that does to our faith as we remind ourselves in song of God's faithfulness? That must be why God commanded us to do it!



Rate your experience of Sharing Growth in Christ in your relationship on a scale of 1 to 10.

Wife: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (circle one)

Husband: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (circle one)

What could you do to spur each other on the right way to growth in Christ?

Wife: _____

Husband: _____

Discuss your responses together.

Write at least one personal application from today's study.

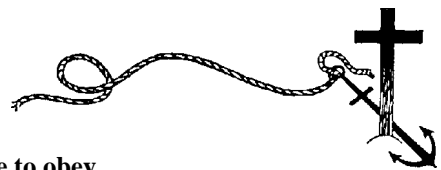
Wife: _____

Husband: _____

What does God want you to do to work out this application?

Wife: _____

Husband: _____



REFLECT TOGETHER: Read Hebrews 10:19-25. Do you have to obey verse 23 before you can do verse 24?

PRAY TOGETHER: Oh, Jesus, we want to live in Your word and let it live in us. Show us ways to encourage one another to grow in You.

