



## Transcriptions

### The Ecology of Spiritual Development

Ted Ward

**Annotation:** *Grace College of the Bible, Omaha, NE, February 27-28, 1981.* A brief summary of Kohlberg's three levels of moral development. Ted Ward observes that Christians and non-Christians can get stalled at any level. He then states three premises of spiritual development that undergird a biblical view of development as a unity that reflects the unity of the Creator.



In the hope that we won't leave things too confused, even after this first hour this morning when we attempted to do far too much in one brief session, I want to go back and reiterate one point that as I recall my organization of the hour I mentioned directly twice and indirectly once. And I want to mention it directly once more and underline it lest any of you do come away with a misunderstanding about the development of the three levels, so if you will allow me just briefly to put a postscript on the first hour before we get cleanly into the second.

I pointed out in reference to these three levels of moral concern that we all begin life with a Level I kind of concern asking questions as a child making our first level of moral judgment on the grounds of what's in it for me, what'll happen to me if I do or if I don't.

Into that whole life comes Level II for those who are structurally developing. Into all of that comes this first big incursion which comes out of a recognition that one, in oneself, is not really adequate to answer moral issues and that moral truth exists outside oneself, not inside. And in that second level of moral development, then, we learn the obedience of going outside to find a moral

reference point. And it's during that time when we particularly become into such things as rules, models, important persons, and all the rest that puts the moral responsibility outside. In the third level, and notice again the arrow, into all that and on the grounds and particularly of the good of this, there is a third level of development.

The third level of development, as I mentioned this morning, is not a matter of abandoning the objective data of Level II. But it is a matter, as our Lord said, of fulfilling the Law; going beyond the particulars of rules and examples and getting into the underneath part of the structure behind those rules and examples. And when our Lord said, "I have come not to destroy the Law but to fulfill the Law," he focused down on the two principles that he said underlie the Law. Now if you want to talk about spiritual life or any other particular kind of doctrinal view of the fulfilled spiritual being, all well and good. But I'm just simply saying to you that these three levels exist for Christian and for non-Christian though Christians can get hung up here. Christians can get hung up here and non-Christians here, as well. The hang-up potentials are the same virtually for everyone. I mentioned that there's a special hang-up problem for the Christian who stays locked into simply the externality of what God has said and resists letting that become a structured body of principle inside life.

Level I: I am moral source.

Level II: Outside of me is moral source and moral truth.

Level III: Moral source from outside now resides within.

Let me give you a specific illustration of this. These lamps above us require a fairly tall ladder to change the bulbs, I would presume, and especially these along the ceiling. Some of you in this room have probably had the experience of changing some of those bulbs. Can I see your hands? There's a bulb-changer, good. And there's another one. Alright. Now you use a fairly tall ladder for that, right? Can you visualize these men up here at the top of three tall ladders? We don't have a third man. I didn't see a third hand but I'm going to pretend a third person, okay?

And I've got these three fellas up here at the top of three ladders and I go to the first man and I say to him, "Jump!" And he looks down at me from up there and he says, "Are you kidding? I'm not about to jump. Do you know what would happen to me if I jumped? There's no way that you're going to be able to do anything about it. I'd end up smushed." By the way, that's a Michigan word. Now it's pretty clear that in that first case I've got no obedience, right? I said to him, "Jump!" And he didn't do it. No obedience.

I go to the second man on the second ladder here and I say to him, "Jump!" He looks down and his question's a little different from the first man. He says, "Do I have to?" You see, I am an authority person here, at least for a day or two 'til you're onto me. And I say to him, "Jump!" And he wants to know if he has to. In other words, is there some rule somewhere that says you've got to; that obedience is crucial? And I say to him, "Yes, you must." Then he says, "Okay, I will, but it's your responsibility." Now what I've got is obedience there and he's ready to come. I've got obedience but no trust. That's characteristic of Level II. We're into the rules of it and we're obedient, but the relationship is still on this strict level of obedience because of a sense of some kind of authority structure.

I go to the third ladder, the third person, and I look up at the top and I recognize a friend and he looks down at me and he recognizes a friend because he and I have known each other for a long time. And I say to him, "Jump!" And he smiles. He may even shake his head, but he says, "You

and I have been through an awful lot together and there are times when I wonder what it is you're asking me to do but you've never let me down yet. Here I come!" Do you hear it? You've never let me down yet. Here I come. What do I have there? I have obedience not out of a sense of duty, but out of a sense of experience and trust on the basis of that experience. Do you see it? Now that's the three sets of relationship if you want to look Godward.

The person who says, "I will or I won't do it in terms of how it fits my scheme, my sense of right and wrong, my sense of hurts." The person who says, "Yes, I will if I have to if that's the rule." And then the person who says, "I will because I trust you and whether or not it makes sense is not the issue. It's our involvement with each other that makes the issue." Now that's what I was driving at. But I point out once again that the issue is not an abandonment of what we know that God has said. In fact, the nurturance for the Christian of Level III grows in Level II so don't lose sight of that.

Now we're going to talk about the ecology of spiritual development and I already mentioned that Warren Ediger had given me some of the linguistics associated with how to organize these thoughts. I've been working on this for several years because I'm very concerned that Christians tend sometimes to split up the human being unmercifully and they tend to make us compartmentalized—the different facets of being human—and then sometimes Christians will even be interested in only one facet and somehow try to ignore all the other facets. Schoolteachers sometimes do this, Sunday school teachers, too. They're perfectly glad to deal with students intellectually, but please leave your emotions outside. They're perfectly glad to deal with us intellectually in a knowledge issues, but please leave your physical needs outside. There are institutions that are set up to try to deal with spiritual development as if it were purely an intellectual matter and we end up with head trips in what's called sometimes Christian education.

The word ecology is a word that came to me in a conversation several years ago with Warren as an illustration or as the key language for what I'm concerned about. Spiritual development exists within a whole set of relationships called 'being human'. Ecology is a word that some people—especially laypersons who don't know science and don't have any background in the scientific thought ecology sounds like not throwing away wastepaper but recycling it, or not cutting down a tree until Christmas-time or something of the sort. Ecology is not simply recycling things. Ecology is not simply being concerned about who dumps what into the river. Ecology is a scientific proposition that comes from long-standing and is only recently applied to the problem of resource utilization. Resource utilization and pollution is a fairly recent application of the word ecology." The word ecology is much older and the word ecology in science speaks of two particular functions: one, the function of interdependence. Like in a spider web, you touch any point and every other point quivers. There is no such thing as disconnection. The human existence is itself a web; a web of interconnected parts, in some cases orderly, in some cases disorderly, but it is impossible to touch human experience at any one point without having implications for every other.

I discovered that when I broke my leg skiing in 1970—last time I went skiing, by the way—and shattered it rather badly and I was laid up for a good long while. But I figured just as soon as we got the basic physical problem underway and the thing on the mend that I would begin to do my work from my bed in the hospital first and then at home. I was five months before I could walk. It was a pretty bad break and I had to reassemble the thing with a combination of what I assumed was Elmer's cement. It was a good bit of time, but it felt a lot like that—and fragments of bone. And after getting to the place where they were saying, "Yes, it is mending and yes, you can begin to do

anything you want to,” I began to try to do some of my work related to my role at the university from my bed and I found out that I was turning out very bad work. Secretaries would send back things that were dictated so badly that they couldn’t even make sense out of it. And my dealings even with people during that period were very badly influenced by the physical ailment that had beset me. And I really came to an understanding in that period that there is no such thing in human life as parts. Every part is interconnected. Every aspect is interconnected with every other aspect in an ecological sense. You touch any part and it influences every other part.

The other concept embedded in ecology is the notion that somehow behind it all everything is a single system; everything is basically a single system or a set of sub-systems that altogether relate and function together. There’s something inherently biblical and inherently creational about the notion of ecology and that is that there is some sort of ordered process reflected in creation and that all of creation is in harmony and in balance with its different facets and that every part fits together. And that whether we’re talking about the human life as a unit of one or whether we’re talking about human society or whether we’re talking about the whole universe that the God who created was a God who created as a single system in which many parts fit together, influence and work among each other in a way that produces a comprehensive whole. These two notions of interdependence and single system-ness I believe are what lie behind a scripturally correct view of spiritual development.

Spiritual development is not a thing apart. It is at the very soul and core of human existence. And to understand spiritual development—which is really what we’re all about, the work of the church is a spiritual work; the work of Jesus Christ in the gospel is a spiritual ministry. But that spiritual ministry cannot be understood correctly if it is assumed to be a thing apart. It is within the whole web of human experience. The spiritual part, aspect, person, nature, soul of an individual is in touch with and is representative of all other parts or aspects of human personhood. And within all of that there is a unity; a unity that reflects the unity of the Creator. Now these are the theological presuppositions.

Let me get on now with more specific premises. First of all, a series of three premises that we’ll call a biblical view of spiritual development. And the word development here is sometimes rendered growth. However, I’m a little allergic to the word growth because growth is not a positive always. It’s sometimes a negative. We talk about tumorous growths which are not regarded as very nice. In other words, inappropriate growth or malformation is also called growth and I think we have to be very careful. Personally, I prefer to use the words spiritual development and let it go at that. But many of my educator friends persist in using the word growth and so I at least indicate that I can use it and then illustrate it in the first lines.

Spiritual growth is a process not arriving at a status. The distinction between viewing growth or development as process versus viewing it as arriving at a stage or a platform or a level or an accomplished fulfillment called maturity is at stake here. As far as I’m concerned as a developmental person within the fields of social science I do not rightly understand human life to be mature at a certain level. If I were to say to you how many of you here this morning regard yourselves as mature, the odds are that quite a few hands would go in the air because what you’re hearing there is, are you appropriately mature for your particular stage in life? Do you follow me? And I can buy that, too. I think I am mature for my stage in life. Where I am in life, I am mature. Some of us may see somebody else in the room—not ourselves, of course—but somebody else in the room who is immature. Meaning for that person’s stage and age, they really do behave in a somewhat juvenile way

or a somewhat immature way. So we say immaturity/maturity is a matter of being where one would be expected to be given the stage of life.

Now many of you will discover that being a parent produces a good bit more maturity in a hurry because there are many things that shift as you move into that very important role of parenthood. And there are things about you as a mature person now that will become, by comparison, very immature because of the maturing process of family responsibility, marriage, and children. Spiritual growth, then, for a Christian should never been seen as an arriving at a stage. And if you look carefully at Paul's writing, Paul is very concerned about maturity. And the apostle Paul talks a lot about maturity, but he talks about maturity always in a continuing, ongoing process. We will come back to that, perhaps, if time allows.

The second premise is that within this process there are factors. These factors aid us or hinder us in our development. And these factors are so many that it would not pay us at this time to begin making a count of them. But let's say that for one thing our educational opportunities are such a factor that can aid in this process of development. A good marriage is another factor that can aid in this development. A responsible role in a church can aid in this development. There are many factors that can aid in this development.

There are factors that can hinder in this development. And many of you are aware of factors in your life now that do hinder your development. And if I were to ask you at this moment, can you identify a factor in your life something that is within your lifestyle that you let be in there; that you know does not aid but, in fact, hinders your development; the odds are that most of us could identify and put our hands up, except that we're not about to. Most of us are able to discriminate between the factors in our lives that do and don't hinder and aid our development. And if we're honest with ourselves, we don't really need outside consulting. One of the reasons that people go to psychologists and to go to other kinds of counselors is because they're not honest enough with themselves to face realities. They have to hear somebody else say it. There's a lot to be said for people becoming more able to look into themselves. As our Lord asked in the teachings of the little letter of James, we're encouraged to look at ourselves as in a mirror and to get a clearer picture of who we are and what we're becoming, and hang into that kind of feedback and be concerned about what we find in ourselves. And the distinction is made by James of the Christian who is developing and the Christian who's not developing; and the one who's developing is interested in feedback on himself/herself.

The third premise. Every Christian is invited by the Word of God to lay hold of these factors, to appropriate them, to get control of them, and to acknowledge responsibility, and then to become an active partner in the process. One of the saddest things of our time is the ease with which people can shrug and say, I didn't mean to do it, or, I wasn't responsible. It even goes into our courts where people are, right and left, using the plea of insanity. Now virtually anything that we do that we don't want to face up to afterwards is much easier to face if you say well, I didn't really have myself in control at that moment. I was insane. Well, it's one of the most glorious copouts you can possibly imagine. Now I'm not suggesting that there is not such a possibility of a person being in fact out of control mentally. But I'm suggesting that it has become almost the stylish alibi for all of us to simply say well, in that fit of rage I really wasn't in control. You'll have to understand that that wasn't me; that was just anger. Well, from a Christian perspective, you can't get off the hook that easily because the Spirit of God does give you resources, does give you a command and a grip on those things, and there's no use in trying to shrug and say, but I'm not responsible. God says you are

responsible. And our biggest complaint against behaviorism as a manifestation of deterministic philosophy is that it tends to give people too easy a copout and makes them feel that they really have a natural alibi built into every situation, namely, the environment made me that way. There were even two cases, one in California and one in Florida two years ago, both cases rape cases, where the defense was that the person wasn't responsible because they had watched too much television. Well, now, you figure it out. If we're in a society where just having a habit of watching too much television is your court defense for such a crime, we're in a sad state of affairs. It is definitely not a very Christian way to look at life.

Now in order to get on with this business, we should understand what some of the divisions or functions or aspects of personhood really are. And you know the Bible is not consistent about this partly because the Bible doesn't attempt to be some kind of a scientific catalogue. The Bible sometimes talks about body, soul, and spirit; other times talks about spirit and body, mind and body, soul and body, soul and mind and body. You find the Bible putting together in bipartite, tripartite, quadrate settings the different aspects of human personhood.

Now in the scientific realm we usually focus studies on five aspects and I've identified them here: the physical, intellectual, social, moral, and emotional. Now I've listed them in this list differently than they will be listed in a subsequent transparency, so I put you on guard. They are listed here in terms of what I've called the strength or persistence of the developmental program itself. Now what do I mean by developmental program? There is in the human organism what we call psychogenetic functions. There is as part of your genes a pattern of development. Now you say, wait a minute. Is that really true? Well, of course, it is. Very few of you here can do what our Lord said you couldn't do and that is, by taking thought, add one inch to your height. But your height is what it is as a reflection of your genetic structure, right?

Are you aware that there are many things about your physical development that reflect a very strong program in you genetically. Very few of us have to be encouraged, as men, to grow a beard. Parents who say, "Now, Charles, I've just got to have you take a hard look at this. You've just got to grow a beard. You're thirteen-and-a-half going on fourteen and some of the other guys are already shaving. You've just got to do something about it." You say well, no. That's rather absurd. Nobody gets into that program and tries to influence. It's just there. You understand what I mean? The program is there. The unfolding pattern is there. It's built in. It's part of the created you. It's down to you psycho-genetically from the origins in creation. And all of your secondary sex characteristics and all the rest of this are a part of that manifest program and there are variations among us but, by and large, it's a pretty persistent program and it tends not to hang up. You don't find an awful lot of people who are afflicted by dwarfism, just quitting their physical growth. You find some. These are aberrations. These are evidences of an un-firm program in that person genetically. And we know those to be genetic aberrations. They are quirks of nature where the program has gone wrong because of a genetic damage somewhere.

Now the intellectual processes also are programmed and everyone begins thinking in life about the same, and that is you begin thinking in very concrete ways about things and you use your mind to manipulate things. So as a little kid in a crib, you begin to reach out and you learn by hitting things. Do you ever watch a little kid in a crib reach out and hit the side? You'd think they'd go purple the way they bang, bang, bang. Or haven't you ever been around little kids? Boy, they're really awful. They do a lot of things because they're trying to learn. And from an adult perspective, it's almost hard to put up with because what they're really trying to do is to interact with the

environment around and that's the way they learn. Now some of you may still do that. You know, when things don't go right you reach out and hit something. But that's not very normal, is it? Because as a matter of fact, without anybody encouraging you, you tend to move beyond that stage in the program in your intellectual development. And then you move into being able to manipulate ideas in your head and you begin to put ideas back and forth, but they're usually ideas about things. First of all, the handling of things, secondly, the thinking abstractly about things, and then, ultimately, thinking abstractly about ideas.

Now in our society, that part of the program—the intellectual development program—comes forward fairly persistently and most people, by college age, are quite able to deal with intellectual thought and to deal with abstraction and thinking about ideas. And those of you who have persevered and attempted to draw something from this lecture series are examples of people who are really grappling with ideas because that's all I've been dealing with is ideas. I've given you very few concrete illustrations. I've given you very few sob stories. I've given you very few of that kind of heart-wrenching, you know, warm things that make you feel emotional. I've tried to deal with you as people who can think about ideas. But that program is a little less persistent; a little less stubborn than the physical development program. And as we come down this list, they get even less persistent.

The social development program next. As we learn social relationships and as we unfold into a social being, we unfold at different times and some of us don't begin to bloom socially until later than others. I was a person by the time I got out of high school that still couldn't even stand to be around people. That's one reason I went into music. I'm getting darts from the first row, here. Sorry about that. The emotional development program is even less persistent. It has a lot more fragile nature.

And at the bottom of these programs is the moral development program which is the least stubborn of all. These are the aspects of human personhood. Now when I say stubborn I mean intentionally unfolding as part of the genetic structure of you. And we talked last hour about this last one—the moral development program and how it unfolds across those three levels. And you remember, I told you time and again that lots of people don't get anywhere. They stalemate right in the first level. All the way through life they're stuck in that first level. They are, if you please, moral dwarfs.

Now those are the aspects of human personhood that are studied scientifically. And if I said to you, I, as a Christian, believe that that is a fair inventory of the aspects of human personhood and as far as I'm concerned, that's it. you might take some offense because I seem to have left something out, have I not? What have I left out? I seem to have left out the spiritual. But I have a dotted line here, and below the dotted line I have spiritual with an asterisk in order that I not be ridden out of town on a rail. But let me assert something and ask you to contemplate it seriously. The spiritual is not really an aspect. The spirit is an essence, is the essence of the person. And persons without Christ are described as *spiritually dead*, but in all other aspects they may be alive. In the aspects they may be alive, or let's say persistently are alive, but still are described theologically as *spiritually dead*. The essence is dead in Adam's sin to be made alive in Christ.

Now let me warn you that if you tuck in the spiritual as just one more aspect, you have then gotten yourself into a very strange predicament. If the spiritual is but another aspect—we've been asked the question why can't you evaluate it, assess it empirically. Why can't you study it

scientifically? Why can't I see it? I can you show everything about those other attributes. I can show you the emotional. I can show you the social. I can show you the intellectual, the physical, and the moral, but I can't show you the spiritual because it is of a different sort of stuff. It is that oneness with God—back to our creational developmentalism from lecture one—it is that business of sharing with God an identity in spirit that is a walking, talking, communicating relationship with God. And if it is made alive in Christ it is not another aspect added on to all these other aspects, but it is essence. Because when we said dead with one statement and yet live, we're talking about dead physically but yet live spiritually. Absent from the body, present with the Lord. The physical is in the body so the physical is not the essence. None of these other attributes are the essence.

Experientially, we can view spiritual development this way. First, the spiritual development begins with regeneration—being born again, generated from anew, a new genesis—then you have spiritual life. Now this helps us to explain how people can have moral conscience because their moral self is alive, even if their spiritual self is dead. To presume that there is an identity between morality and spirituality is to fail to understand morality. Morality is a part of the natural created being. Spiritual is not part of the natural created being; it is the dead part, the dead essence of the created being that is available for regeneration, and that is called the new birth.

The spiritual development begins with regeneration and the spiritual development interacts with all other aspects of development. Therefore, those of us who are concerned about the development of our youngsters, of our students in any kind of an educative relationship with them; we must be concerned about all the five aspects in relation to the spiritual. I cannot approach you directly on the spiritual level. I can approach you directly on the social level, on the intellectual level, on the moral level, but I cannot approach you directly on the spiritual level.

Any of us who teach in classrooms are spending a lot of time with intellectual stuff, some time with moral stuff, and a little time with social stuff and, to some extent, with some of the others. But as we deal, we're trying to go through that aspect in order to relate to the spiritual core—the essence. And that is a very significant distinction because so often we, if lacking that understanding, can put ourselves into a fit of frenzy concerned about the intellectual development of people. They've got to know Christ, which means know about Christ. They've got to know all these doctrinal facts. That's the big thing: the head trip. And I tell you, that the head trip is not the essence of spiritual reality. What you know in your head obviously is important, but it is not the controlling mechanism of your spiritual life. Your spiritual life can respond to proper intellectual nourishment, but the spiritual life if only approached in an intellectual way will be a blighted spiritual life.

The environment of a person whether in growing up at home and in school or whether in college years or whether in life as parent and family and church member and worker in this or that or the other activity, we must recognize that all of these aspects: the physical, mental—in the sense of cognitive and the mental in the sense of emotional—and then moral and social; all these aspects must be kept in the front line, all given attention, and none neglected if spiritual development is to occur.

Spiritual development changes one's orientation toward self, flesh, and Satan. And these I believe to be the key earmarks of whether spiritual development is going on. Spiritual development means that you re-order, re-organize, re-conceptualize, re-experience yourself and you come to have different sorts of feelings about yourself. You come to see yourself in a different sort of a way. There's an early stage where you recognize that the self that is you is, in many ways, despicable.

There's a later stage in which you recognize that the self that is you is worthy of God's attention. And that suddenly dawns on you with a great deal of excitement and you realize isn't that marvelous? I am an object. No matter what I am—poor, despicable, whatever—I am the object of God's affection. It's like the person who suddenly discovers after many years of wondering that, indeed, somebody charming can fall in love with them. And it really changes your orientation to yourself I can assure.

It also changes your orientation toward the flesh. You begin to be aware within yourself that there is a flesh residue; a continuing presence of the fact of sinfulness that, yes, you have a new nature but there is a persistence in yourself of this flesh nature. And you begin to understand with a lot more clarity what Paul is driving at when he makes the distinctions between the fleshly self; the flesh as influence of satanic presence. And then you begin to understand more about the personhood of Satan himself and Satan becomes less an abstraction and more a concrete, tangible reality, and you begin to accept the propositions of the reality of the spiritual domain and the spirit world. These three I believe are key manifestations of spiritual development and are probably the things we really ought to be concerned with much more than testing for facts.

The other thing that we have on this chart is that spiritual development deepens one's relationship to God in these three ways: spiritual development deepens one's relationship to God as we actualize the lordship of Christ in our lives. You see, there's one thing to acknowledge the lordship of Christ: yes, Christ is my Lord. There is another thing to go beyond that intellectual acknowledging and have an experiential involvement with Christ in which we actualize, or make real, the lordship of Christ in our lives. And this comes back to my Level III concern that we be in the person of Christ and answering moral issues in terms of how Christ is manifesting himself through his Word and through the ministry of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Spiritual development deepens one's relationship to God also by reducing one's resistance to the working of the Holy Spirit. The language of the New Testament suggests that the Holy Spirit can be resisted. And as we resist the Holy Spirit, we cut down on the power source for our life. We make it harder for God to work. And the Christian, even the Christian who is clearly redeemed, clearly walking in faith, clearly committed to the Word of God can be resisting the working of the Holy Spirit by holding out corners of one's own experience and say, Yes, I know. I want God to work in this, this, and this and this but I still want to have this little private corner all to myself, and I know it's not right but that's the way it is. And there are a lot of us that go through life that way and it's a very dissonant way to live.

The third, spiritual development deepens one's relationship to God by increasing one's identity with God's transcendence. I believe that the person who is really spiritually developing is getting a larger and larger and larger view of God every day and a more keen awareness that God is tremendous and that God does not need to be reminded of things. God does not need to be coaxed to do things. God does not need to be challenged as to whether or not he's strong enough to do things. God is almighty. And that growing of consciousness is part of the symptom of spiritual development.

Now I'd like to make a little divergence into the negative because there are some things we can talk about better in the negative. And I'd like to talk briefly about how we can avoid spiritual maturity because some people seem to be making a full-time habit of it anyway. And so I thought

maybe it might help if you had a list that you kind of tick yourself off each day and make sure you're still on your own straight and narrow.

How do you avoid spiritual maturity? There are some pretty clear-cut ways. First of all, we should understand that maturing is a natural process, but it is not automatic. Do you remember I talked about those programs of development—the physical, so forth and so on? As we talk about the less strong programs, we're talking about movement from automatic to not necessarily going to happen, like in the moral development. It can be interfered with very readily by what you do in your experiences. And spiritual development is a lot like that. It's not automatic. It's not something that just God is obligated to continue to do and lets you have it and more and more every day and no matter what your part is. Now the Holy Spirit of God is faithful and will continue to do a work in you. That we can count on. But we also have to recognize our own part in that.

And here are a few suggestions about how to avoid spiritual maturity. Those who avoid spiritual maturity do so through one of the following. And I'm going to give you two lists—a personal list and a social list. At the personal level, the first thing you can do if you're really interested in stalemating your spiritual development is that you can be disrespectful of human beings. Disrespectful of human beings is certainly one of the keys to stalemating your spiritual development. If you have no respect for yourself—and after all you are a human being, too—if you have no respect for yourself and for those around you and you try real hard to show that, you'll really be able to do this quite well and we'll all be able to observe it.

Further in the personal realm: you can resist the growing-up processes that are going on in your life. And, boy, there are people who do that. In fact, I sometimes wonder about some of my colleagues who are in their 40's by now and their early 50's who are still doing very childish kinds of things. They're grasping and holding onto youth. There's something about suddenly getting to the age of 40 or, to some people, 50 that says, "Oh, boy! It may be all behind me. I better hang onto these things of youth and I want to resist growing up." And, by the way, for a developmentalist you never quit growing-up. Life continues. You continue to unfold. And having past 50 myself I can tell you it's really fun to think of as there's a lot ahead and there's a lot of development ahead and there's a lot that's still going on and I'm excited about it and I don't want to resist those processes because God is helping me grow-up and I'm enjoying it. But if you really want to stop your spiritual development, here's a great thing to do: just resist the growing-up processes and remain as an adolescent forever and it's great.

Disconnecting one aspect of development from the other. Getting a big kick on, for example, a big kick in physical culture or a big kick in mental tripping or a big kick in emotionality or a big kick in any of these separate aspects. Anytime you go on a big kick, you're going to interfere with your spiritual development. You've got to stay balanced if you want spiritual development. You can't go off on single aspect kicks.

Resisting the work of the Holy Spirit. Now this is perhaps a little abstract but it's the way the Bible talks about it. There is such a thing as resisting the work of the Holy Spirit in your life and it will produce stalemated spiritual development. The Holy Spirit is at work in our lives if we let him continue his work and you can resist this at a very personal level.

Now socially there are some neglects that do lead to spiritual stalemate and maybe some of this can be seen in your own experience or in the experiences of others. But I am asking you not to

use this formula to judge other people, but to consider and to judge and to reflect on your own experience.

Neglecting family. You see, there are three basic institutions—family, church, and community—that are virtually scriptural in that their foundations are laid down in the creation. And when we neglect ourselves as social beings in contact with those three institutional functions, we are running the risk of stalemating our spiritual development. And I don't care how turned off you are to a given church. The church of Jesus Christ, the body of Christians, and a particular local manifestation of that is something that you need. And as you participate in it and do your contributory bit within the work of Christ in that place, it has an effect in your spiritual development. You cut that off, you remove yourself from that, and it will affect negatively your spiritual development.

Similarly, the involvement with the larger community around us. If there's anything that I see today that is a very dangerously growing habit, it is the withdrawing of Christians. More and more we draw into ghettos and we drew our own little thing and we neglect the community around us. We're intended to be *salt* and *light* and you can't be *salt* and *light* if you draw in and out of yourself and build your walls around yourself and have your own Yellow Pages which, by the way, is happening.

I'd like to read for you a passage in in the Word of God in Philippians the 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter 7<sup>th</sup> verse as we listen to Paul talk a little bit about spiritual development, his own development, and his outlook on development; and we see that Paul is thinking in terms of an ecology, an interrelatedness of the parts of life. The 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter of Philippians the 7<sup>th</sup> verse: "But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Jesus Christ my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things and count them but rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ, and may be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the law," notice that, "but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being conformed to his death, in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead."

And you say well, doesn't he know he's already got it? Look he's a developmentalist and he's thinking of God's continuing to unfold for him the real fullness of the resurrection. He has not yet attained the physical redemption though he has a spiritual life. "Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on in order that I may lay hold of that for which I was laid hold of by Christ."

Christ took a hold of me in order that I could press on with him, that I could develop, that I could become alive spiritually and that my spiritual being could develop. "I press onward toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore as many as are perfect have this attitude, and if in anything you have a different attitude, God will reveal that also to you. However, let us keep living by that same standard to which we have attained. Brethren, join in following my example. Observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us."

Verse 20, "For our citizenship is in heaven from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform the body of our humble state in the conformity with the body of his glory."

In other words, God's redemption even reaches down to the physical and we are promised in Scripture a new body. We are promised the whole fulfillment of what we are as person made perfect in the blood of Christ, "by the exertion of the power that he has even to subject all things to himself."

And in closing I'd like to share with you a passage that I have taken as favorite in the 5<sup>th</sup> chapter of 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians. Again, a very developmental, a very social, a very community passage; a passage of Paul's great expression of his commitment to the building of a family relationship within the people of God and the strengthening of a community relationship as the church.

#### I Thessalonians 5:11-25 (NASB)

Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing. But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction, and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another. We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone. See that no one repays another with evil for evil, but always seek after that which is good for one another and for all people. Rejoice always, pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. Do not quench the Spirit; do not despise prophetic utterances. But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; abstain from every form of evil. Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass. Brethren, pray for us.