**Families Under God**

**Recognizing the Pitfalls That Hinder Spiritual Growth**

**Introduction**

Imagine the devil ringing your doorbell and asking, “May I have your children?” It

wouldn’t take you long to respond. You could probably come up with some creative

ways to handle your uninvited and unwanted guest. We’d battle such spiritual

confrontation at all costs!

All Christians will do everything possible to grow spiritually and help those they love grow spiritually. Right? In a perfect world that statement would be true. We try to do everything we can to promote the spiritual growth of our fellow Christians. Yet we are imperfect Christians, living alongside imperfect Christians in an imperfect world. Some pitfalls that hinder spiritual growth can be avoided. Some cannot. Understanding the difference will help us in our walk as children of God, and will also allow us to help those we love.

**Scripture**

“I undertook great projects: I built houses for myself and planted vineyards. I made

gardens and parks and planted all kinds of fruit trees in them. I made reservoirs to

water groves of flourishing trees. I amassed silver and gold for myself, and the treasure

of kings and provinces. . . .

“Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve,

everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the

sun” (Ecclesiastes 2:4-6,8,11).

“If anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better

for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths

of the sea.

“Woe to the world because of the things that cause people to sin! Such things must come,

but woe to the man through whom they come! If your hand or your foot causes you to sin,

cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life maimed or crippled than to have

two hands or two feet and be thrown into eternal fire. And if your eye causes you to sin,

gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than to have

two eyes and be thrown into the fire of hell” (Matthew 18:6-9).

“I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to

do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no,

the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. What a wretched man I am! Who will

rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!”

(Romans 7:18,19,24,25).

**Study**

**1. God gave Solomon the means to do anything he wanted in life, and Solomon did**

**everything, contemplating whether anything gave him true satisfaction. This was part**

**of Solomon’s path to wisdom. Consider what Solomon observed when he looked back**

**at the “great things” he had done. How might our observation be similar as we wrestle**

**with the demands of our jobs and the responsibilities of life? What can**

**we learn from Solomon’s observations?**

**2. Jot down some things you can do to create a good material life for yourself, your children, your family, etc? In other words, what are some things you can do to remember what is most important?**

**3. In Matthew chapter 18, Jesus warns against leading anyone into sin. Rephrase the**

**warnings of Jesus in such a way that they would apply specifically to Christian parents, Christian youth, or Christians in general.**

**4. Make a list of sinful things in your life that you or your children might see that could be a spiritual pitfall? What steps can you take to get rid of these negative influences?**

**5. Paul carried on an ongoing battle with his sinful nature. Why is it important for**

**Christians to remember that they (and their spouse, parents, children, friends, boyfriend/girlfriend) are fighting the same battle that the apostle Paul fought?**

**6. How can Christians more effectively make use of Christ’s victory over sin to nurture**

**their faith?**

**Closing Prayer**

Lord Jesus Christ, open our eyes to see our weaknesses and faults. Wash us clean where we

have failed. Give us the strength to set a God-pleasing example for our children. Nurture

our families through the good news of your victory over sin and death, and let us celebrate

that victory in godly living, for your holy name’s sake. Amen