

# **Two Steps Forward and One Step Back: Are You Making Any Progress at All?**

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The world is a competitive place. To “make the grade” whether in school or the workplace, we find we have to do it better, quicker, and wiser than the next person. It used to be called “ambition,” and was one of the most important issues when a prospective bride’s parents interviewed any young man who was interested in their daughter. In spite of COVID, people have not dropped the need to succeed.

We need to look at life not in a linear sense of going from point A to point B. We need to see it as a river, deep and wide with swirling rapids as well as slow, eddying pools. Each has its uses for our lives. Sometimes we can, with God’s grace, move the unsurmountable mountains faster than time itself. Other times, we seem like we are paddling the wrong way up stream and losing ground but God’s grace is still staying with us.

Going forward and backward can happen in our careers, our ministry, and our relationships. We may not understand why the boss acknowledges our successes with a quick head nod but lambasts us for a tiny error. Yet, we can hold onto the boss’ words for months, while the boss has long forgotten the error. Our ministry activities may be producing much fruit when suddenly resources dry up and our volunteers move away,. We may feel we are making inroads into the soul of our hard-headed teenager when suddenly we receive verbal abuse that somehow came out of that person you breastfed and cuddled.

As we pray for the river of our lives to flow freely before us, you need to gain insight into why God has designed your humanity to move forward and backward. I want you to remember that if you were to constantly move forward, it usually would lead you to greater challenges mentally, emotionally, and physically. We need to have periods of taking in deep breaths and giving God our focused attention so He can speak to our hearts.

As you journey, remember that the river is going somewhere, On the Eastern Shore of Maryland, there are rivers that wander in loops, cutting back on themselves to the starting

point of the previous loop. Eventually these streams succeed to empty to the Chesapeake Bay. During the journey, the wandering rivers provide marshes that are nesting grounds to many waterfowl who would never hatch their young near a raging river. While your forward progress seems to wander, use the time to rework your dream. God can bring about some new beginnings, like in your relationship with your husband, when you begin to gain perspective from God's point of view.

When you start to step backward, try not to be so proud that you cannot admit you need God (and perhaps other people) to help you move forward again. Like me, I am sure you love helping others but don't want to be the one that is being helped. Yet if you and I don't allow somebody to give to us, we disavow the blessing they can receive helping you move forward.

God has not asked you to be perfect. You need to give yourself the opportunity to fail without gathering an accompanying depressing spirit. Instead gather within yourself a teachable spirit, one where God can directly or through others give you new information, a new paradigm, or a rejuvenated excitement for what is ahead. Then draw from your creativity and your ability to envision something better than even what you had before.

Remember, the best of the best have failed.. Edison said he took 1.000 steps before the light bulb worked. Some may have looked at these 1000 steps as failures, but he saw them as vital as the successes so he knew what not to do and then what to do. No one talks about Edison as a failure. He was a man who used his river to the greatest advantage. Medical researchers continuously bounce back from multiple failures or they wouldn't have developed the cures and vaccines that define our progress in medicine.

Nothing is wasted when God is involved. Oswald Chambers said, "If you are going through a time of discouragement, there is a time of great personal growth ahead." Actually, you really aren't losing with the step backward, unless you become overwhelmed with it. I don't want you to create a porch out of just one little step backward. Two steps forward minus one step back is still forward progress!

Take snapshots of your journey by writing in your journal so you can bless God through each experience, forward or backward. Enjoy your river, woman of God!