

DAY 15 FRIDAY

HEBREWS 5:11-6:3 NOT EASY, BUT WORTHWHILE

¹¹ We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn. ¹² In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! ¹³ Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. ¹⁴ But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.

^{6:1} Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, ² instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. ³ And God permitting, we will do so.

Complacency is a constant threat to any human activity. We get accustomed to the status quo and satisfied with doing just what it takes to get by. This is evident in every aspect of our lives; physical, intellectual and spiritual. Who hasn't been accused of not living up to his potential, or at least known someone who hasn't? Whether it is the poor performance of the high school athlete recruited by a major college or the pastor who settles into a survival pattern, the tragedy of unfulfilled expectations is played out around us every day. Although virtually invisible to the rest of the world, most of us probably fall into this category when it comes to our spiritual lives.

Growth takes work and work takes time and energy. Because we live lives that are out of balance, time and energy are in short supply. We are driven to use what time and energy we can muster to produce something that is both immediate and tangible. What gets lost in the shuffle is the long term and intangible goal of a growing relationship with God.

The answer provided by the Church has been the spiritual disciplines of Scripture study, prayer and practical piety. The spiritually mature are those who *have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil*. Every coach knows that true development comes in an individual when the lessons and disciplines become internalized. They speak of the individual having a "fire in his belly." It is the burning desire to do the best possible job, and perhaps a little more, that takes the individual to the "next level" of performance and differentiates that individual from all others. The author of the letter, as our coach, is exhorting us to not settle for the easy and stagnant but take on practices that will challenge us and bring growth. A good place to start is to stop reading Scripture for a message that will make us feel good and start studying Scripture in order to be convicted of our short comings and for instruction as to how we can live in closer obedience to God's will.

You know my inclination to drift into complacency, Lord, and my fondness for the easy road. Prod me into a willingness search your Word and discipline my heart so that I might grow in my love and obedience to you. Amen.