

Direction, Not Perfection

A Spiritual Direction Checkup for Believers

Focus Truth

Growing obedience does not save us. Jesus does. But when Christ gives new life, He begins changing the direction of our lives. The question is not whether we obey perfectly, but whether His will is increasingly becoming our destination.

Before You Begin

This checkup will help you examine the direction of your life without turning obedience into another spiritual scorecard. The goal is not to prove that you have arrived or to count every failure. It is to look honestly at whether knowing Christ is changing where you are headed, recognize movement that may be slow, and keep Jesus as the foundation of your assurance.

① Name the Destination

Read 1 John 2:3–6. John connects knowing Christ with keeping His commands and walking as Jesus did. He has already acknowledged that believers still sin, so he is not describing flawless obedience. He is describing a life that has begun moving in a new direction.

What part of 1 John 2:3–6 stands out to you most, and why?

Where has the question “What does God want?” begun to matter more than “What do I want?”

Finish the sentence: One area where Christ has begun changing the direction of my life is...

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② Notice the Recalculation

A missed exit matters, but it does not mean the destination disappeared. A GPS recognizes that you are off course and begins directing you back. In the Christian life, correction and repentance often work the same way. The question is not whether you ever take a wrong turn, but what happens when God shows you that you are off course.

Think of a recent wrong turn in your attitudes, choices, or habits. What helped you recognize that you were off course?

How did you respond when you first recognized the problem?

What did turning back toward God look like in that situation?

Where are you currently resisting a course correction you already know you need to make?

Finish the sentence: When God shows me that I am off course, I want to...

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③ Look for Movement

Spiritual growth is not always dramatic. Sometimes the clearest evidence of movement is that your response has begun changing even while the struggle remains. Look for ways Christ is reshaping how you repent, forgive, speak, receive correction, and surrender your preferences.

Signs of Movement

- Quicker repentance: You recognize wrong more readily and return to God sooner.
- Growing forgiveness: Bitterness may still tempt you, but you are less willing to keep it.
- Changing speech: Words, jokes, or reactions that once seemed normal begin to trouble you.
- Greater teachability: Correction may still sting, but you are more willing to ask whether it is true.

Which sign of movement above do you recognize most clearly in your life? Give one example.

Where has your response changed even though the struggle itself has not completely disappeared?

What change might someone who knows you well notice that you are tempted to overlook?

Finish the sentence: One way I can see movement toward Christ is...

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④ Direction, Not Perfection

Direction, not perfection, does not make sin unimportant. It means that the evidence of spiritual life is not flawless performance. First John holds both truths together: believers still need confession and an Advocate, yet knowing Christ begins producing a life that wants to follow Him.

Better Questions for Honest Examination

Instead of Asking...	Ask...
Do I obey God perfectly?	Is obedience increasingly important to me?
Have all my old habits disappeared?	When I fail, do I want to return to Christ?
Am I as mature as other Christians?	Is Christ changing me from where I began?
Do I never resist correction?	Am I becoming more teachable over time?
Have I arrived?	Which direction is my life moving?

Which “better question” helps you most right now? Why?

Where are you most tempted to demand perfection from yourself instead of looking honestly at direction?

How does 1 John 1:8–2:2 protect you from misunderstanding the strong words about obedience in 1 John 2:3–6?

Finish the sentence: Direction, not perfection, helps me remember that...

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⑤ Slow Growth Is Still Growth

It is easy to stare at how far you still have to go and overlook how far Christ has already brought you. Slow growth should never become an excuse for refusing to grow, but slow does not mean nonexistent. Looking at the longer story can help you recognize movement you might miss when you judge yourself by one difficult day.

Ways to Look at the Longer Story

- Look back over years, not only at how you feel today.
- Compare your present direction with where you began, not with another Christian.
- Notice changed responses, not only struggles that have completely disappeared.
- Thank God for real movement while continuing to take the next faithful step.

When you look back over the last few years, where can you see a change in your direction?

What slow growth have you been overlooking because you are focused on how far you still have to go?

Where has comparison with another Christian made it harder for you to recognize God's work in your own life?

Finish the sentence: One faithful next step Christ is calling me to take is...

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⑥ Which Direction Are You Going?

A wrong turn is one thing. Choosing a different destination is another. Scripture gives hope to believers who stumble and keep returning to Christ, but it does not offer easy reassurance to a life settled in refusal to follow Him. This final section asks you to look honestly at where you are headed.

Where is it clearest that Christ has become the destination of your life?

Is there any area where you know what Christ says but have become settled in refusing His direction? What needs to change?

When God corrects you, do you increasingly want His direction or your own? Describe what that struggle looks like.

What do you need to bring honestly to Christ today as you consider the direction of your life?

One-Sentence Takeaway

The Christian life is not a journey without wrong turns. It is a life with a new destination.

Closing Prayer

Father, thank You that my salvation rests on Jesus Christ, not perfect obedience. Thank You for the ways You are changing my direction. When I take a wrong turn, correct me and draw me back. Help me recognize real growth without becoming comfortable with sin. Shape my desires, choices, and habits so my life increasingly follows Christ, and give me grace to take the next faithful step. Amen.

Continue the Journey

Keep looking to Christ, keep responding to His direction, and keep growing in grace

You do not have to stop here.

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The goal is to look to Christ and notice whether He is changing the direction of your life.

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