

Week of February 19-25

This week's devotional-writer is Mark Kiburz. Mark serves on our Board of Elders and is currently pursuing his ministerial credentials with the Assemblies of God.

STUMBLING HURTS EVERYONE

Scripture Reading: Read Mark Chapter 9

"Funniest Home Videos" is a TV show that allows people to send in home videos in hopes of making it on television and, possibly, winning a cash prize. Many times people send in videos of people doing crazy things or being tricked into doing things that make them stumble or fall. We sit and laugh at these shows and at how many different ways people stumble and fall and the faces they make along the way.

However, stumbling spiritually in our lives and causing others to stumble is no laughing matter. Jesus says that we are better off losing body parts or even tying a millstone around our neck and throwing ourselves into the sea rather than causing others to stumble. Romans 12:10 tell us to "*be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves.*" Mathew 22: 38-39 "(The Greatest Commandment) tells us that we are to love God first in our lives and then our neighbors. People that love God and other people would not knowingly lead people to sin. Leading people into sin reflects heart issues. Heart issues appear when we walk in anger, unforgiveness, unrepentance sin, jealousy, or any other sin behavior that separates us from God.

Sin is toxic to our walk with Him. In toxicology, there are two terms we use often to describe a condition's effects on people. This first is "acute" which means "*A disease or disorder that lasts a short time, comes on rapidly, and is accompanied by distinct symptoms*". Although we sometimes stumble over this type of sin, we usually deal with it immediately if we do fall or we seek God's grace to avoid it in the first place.

The second term we use in toxicology is "chronic" which means, "a long-term or recurrent disease". This one is more deadly to believers. Casting Crowns has a song called the "Slow Fade." This song talks about a man's choices that ultimately lead him into adultery. Adultery is an example of a chronic sin which we slowly fade into. Most people who sin in this area didn't intend to when they started. Instead, they began with a slow drift away from Jesus. This was followed by a thought in the mind which became a feeling in the heart and this led to an action with the body. Chronic sin is a slower process and often more spiritually deadly than acute sin. Chronic sin changes our thought processes, our heart can become hardened toward God, and eventually separate us from Him.

Action Step & Prayer Focus: Are there people and situations in your life that are stumbling blocks for you to grow in Jesus? Do we know God well enough to step around them or do we fall on our faces? (**Note:** we so often think stumbling is only about us. The truth is it hurts God, you, the people around you and the Body of Christ.) Ask God to show you stumbling blocks in your life and how to overcome them.

Take-a-way: Stumbling in a video may be funny but causing others to sin spiritually is no laughing matter.