

Upward or Downward First?

When our greatest desire is to **Grow Upward:**

We measure success mainly by the *size* of things that are easy to *see* and *count*: audience, followers, dollars, numbers served.

We think a lot about our reputation, so often swing between pride and insecurity.

We have a very hard time saying “no.”

We’re likely known for talking a lot.

We despise interruptions.

We equate *my* growth with the growth of the Kingdom – my position, my platform, my organization. So while we say otherwise, deep down we believe, “I must increase that He might increase.”

We *can’t stand* feeling disrespected, and react to it with anger.

We struggle with anything that feels unproductive, including prayer and rest. We tend to dislike silence and solitude.

We’re elated when we’re praised and frustrated when ignored.

We hate sickness and suffering, especially because they hinder productivity.

When we don’t get credit for something good we’ve done, it chaps our hide.

Our time horizon is rarely more than 1 to 3 years, and often much less

We often say, “I need to do more faster.”

Even when the surface of life is calm, our heart is restless and discontent.

When our greatest desire is to **Grow Downward:**

We may track outcomes, but we define success most of all by the *quality* of things that are hard to see at first: hearts, faith, well-being, character.

We feel the light yoke of self-forgetfulness.

We say “no” often, even to good things, so we can give ourselves fully to things that matter most.

We’re known especially for listening well.

We see interruptions as opportunities to serve.

We sincerely feel that whatever builds God’s Kingdom is a win, even if we aren’t noticed. So, like John the Baptist, we are glad to decrease if it causes Him to increase.

We don’t like feeling disrespected, but can accept it graciously.

We see that fruitfulness requires seasons without production. So even if we are extroverts, we can enjoy rest, solitude and silence.

We’re grateful when praised and content when ignored.

We dislike sickness and suffering, but also see them as a primary means of growing to be more like Jesus.

When we don’t get credit we deserve, we trust that God will ultimately repay us.

Our time horizon often includes future generations, and even eternity.

We often say, “Lord, multiply the little loaves and fish I bring.”

Even when the surface of life is stormy, our heart is calm.