

**The Biggest Challenge That Strong Christians Face**  
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It's part of human nature for the power of experiences and truths to fade from our consciousness over time. Watch a great movie once, for example, and you enjoy every minute. Watch it again 3 or 4 times, and it suddenly isn't as enjoyable. Familiarity sets in, and what once was new and exciting becomes boring. This doesn't just happen in the trivial things in life, though. Our spiritual lives are subject to the same challenge.

Take a look at Deuteronomy 6, where Moses said those famous words, "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength." After giving the "greatest commandment," he turned his focus to the future. He told the people of Israel to make this commandment the foundation of their home lives, keeping it every day and diligently passing it on to their children (6:6-9).

However, it's what followed those words that I want to focus on. In verses 10-11 Moses reminds them of the wonders of the promised land, that they would be living in houses they did not build and eating from vineyards they did not plant. That's where he warns them of the danger that they would face (and that would bring them down time and time again) – "Then beware, lest you forget the Lord who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage." The rest of the chapter goes on to discuss how they can avoid that through obedience, but that same struggle that they would face is the same one in which we can catch ourselves today.

Moses knew what would happen, because that's what humans do. That's what Israel did over and over and over again in the book of Judges, and in the period of the kings. God works mightily, everyone thanks and praises Him, and then they get busy with life and lose sense of just how much He's done for them.

Like Israel, and like any other humans, the greatest challenge faithful Christians face is the complacency of familiarity.

It's so easy to make our walk with God mechanical, a series of repeated actions that become thoughtless over time. Ask yourself – when was the last time Isaiah 53 or one of the gospel crucifixion accounts brought a tear to your eye? When was the last time you came away from reading a section like Romans 8 or one of the Psalms with a big smile on your face because of God's love, faithfulness, and goodness? I know I often catch myself in that rut where I've read the accounts and commandments before so I know what they're going to say, which leads me to kind of skim through them like data without any emotional attachment. That's precisely where the danger of familiarity sets in.

So what do we do? How do we keep our Christianity from growing stale with familiarity? We remind ourselves of the wickedness of our sins. We remind ourselves of the incalculable depth of His love and grace. We look to the Scriptures, not as a reminder of what we already know, not for a pat on the back for how good we're doing, and not as a book that was given to us simply to refute other people, but to remember once again how great a God we serve, and to stand in His presence in awe. Remember that our walk with God isn't merely a set of duties to be carried out but a relationship to be cultivated. We can't afford to let ourselves get too comfortably familiar with the Scriptures to the point that they lose their power in our lives.